

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Earl Grey, March 10, 1910

Beinn Bhreagh, near Baddeck Nova Scotia COPY March 10, 1910. His Excellency Earl Grey Governor-General of Canada, Ottawa, Canada. Dear Earl Grey:

I enclose for your information a copy of a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Militia Council by Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy (March 10, 1910), containing a proposal to sell their two aerodromes, Baddeck No. 1 and Baddeck No. 2, to the Canadian Government for the sum of \$10,000.

I am glad to learn from Major Maunsell, who is here, that you received my letter of Dec. 27, 1909 from Washington, D. C., so that you know my views upon this subject.

Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy had intended to have made a somewhat similar offer last year in the event of their making successful flights at Petewawa. On account, however, of the mishap to their drome at Petewawa, they felt it inadvisable to approach the Canadian Government upon the subject until they had successfully demonstrated the capabilities of their dromes to fly.

This they have now done; and I beg to enclose photographs of a fine flight made by Mr. Douglas McCurdy in the drome Baddeck No. 2 on March 3.

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On this occasion he was alone; but he has also demonstrated the capability of the machine to carry two persons. On several occasions he has carried Mr. F. W. Baldwin as a passenger. Yesterday he carried Mr. Baldwin in one flight, Mr. William McDonald in another, and then took Major Maunsell for a drome over the ice on Baddeck Bay.

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It may seem strange that Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy should ask the Government to purchase two dromes instead of one; but the reasons will be obvious to you.

They estimate that they will be unable to carry on their factory here without a capital of at least \$10,000; and they prefer to raise this amount by the sale of their two machines.

They realize that it might be considered an imposition upon the Government to ask \$10,000 for one machine; and therefore offer two, as, in their opinion, a fair equivalent for the money, as a charge of \$5000 per machine will yield them only a reasonable profit upon the cost of construction.

\$5000 would not suffice to support their factory but \$10,000 would probably be sufficient to enable it at least to exist; because they are saved the expense of acquiring buildings and workshops of their own for one year, as I have placed the facilities of my Laboratory at their disposal for that period of time 3 without charge.

They are much elated over the fact that they have already received their first order for an aerodrome. This is a monoplane for Mr. Gardiner G. Hubbard of Boston, Mass. It is now practically completed, and they hope to try it out here in a few days if the ice holds out.

They are encouraged to believe that during the course of their next year they may receive other orders for aerodromes from private individuals and from foreign Governments; and that the profits from the sale of these machines may enable them to acquire buildings and machinery of their own, and place the new Canadian industry upon a self-supporting basis.

I think it is in every way desirable that the Canadian Government should acquire two aerodromes rather than one; because accidents of various kinds are always liable to occur with the best machines in the hands of inexperienced aviators. With two dromes, an accident to one will not interfere with continuous practice work. One machine will always be available while the other is being repaired.

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While this seems to be a plausible argument why the Canadian Government should purchase two machines rather than one, the real, and most important reason is that the sum of \$10,000 is necessary to aid a new industry to establish itself upon Canadian soil.

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Of course if the Canadian Government decides to accept the proposition a larger appropriation than \$10,000 will be required; for the Government will have to erect buildings in which to house the aerodromes, do some grading at Petewawa or whatever place may be selected as an aerodrome Park for practice work, and meet the expenses of a staff of experts to be trained as aviators for the Canadian Militia.

I do not know what the total expense of a department of aviation will amount to, but I have given you my ideas upon this subject in my letter of December 27, 1909.

So far as Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy are concerned, all that they want is the sum of \$10,000 to support their industry during another year.

Yours sincerely, (Signed) Alexander Graham Bell PS: — I would emphasize the fact that in purchasing these aerodromes the Government will receive much more than the mere money value of the machine — it will secure the establishment of an aerodrome industry within the Dominion of Canada. This will be of as much advantage to the Canadian Government, as to Messrs. Baldwin and McCurdy, A.G.B.